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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to provide an insight into the socialization process of urban, culturally deprived children by focusing upon the attitudes of their mothers who were respondents not selected on the basis of their willingness to cooperate. As part of a preschool project for culturally deprived children in Ypsilanti, a community on the fringe of metropolitan Detroit, Michigan, the Parental Attitude Research Instrument was administered to a group of middle-class white mothers and a group of lower-lower class Negro mothers. A comparison of the two groups revealed that the sub-scales in two factors had the highest significant differences in means between classes. The first, Approval of Maternal Control, replicated previous work. The second, Maternal Anxiety, was unique to this study. While Brofenbrenner's "drift down" theory and Kohn's "occupational orientation" theory seem applicable to the findings, the authors believe that the oppressive conditions of poverty found among this Negro culturally deprived sample may be an equally potent explanation for differences in the two factors. This study gives indications that the findings of attitudinal investigations involving a white working class employed population cannot automatically be transposed to a deprived Negro population. Unique factors appear to be operating in these lower-lower class families which do not appear elsewhere. (Author/JM)

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MATERNAL ATTITUDES OF A NEGRO CULTURALLY DEPRIVED POPULATION

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Abstract

As part of a preschool project for culturally deprived children, the Parental Attitude Research Instrument was administered to a group of white middle-class mothers and a group of Negro lower-lower class mothers. A comparison of the two groups revealed that the sub-scales in two factors had the highest significant differences in means between classes. The first, Approval of Maternal Control, replicated previous work. The second, Maternal Anxiety, was unique to this study. While Bronfenbrenner's "drift down" theory and Kohn's "occupational orientation" theory seem applicable to the findings, the authors believe that the oppressive conditions of poverty found among this Negro culturally deprived sample may be an equally potent explanation for differences in the two factors.

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MATERNAL ATTITUDES OF A NEGRO CULTURALLY DEPRIVED POPULATION

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and
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Although much interest is currently focused on the subject, relatively little objective information has been published relating to the child-rearing views of disadvantaged Negro mothers. Conclusions based on data collected from a working class sample cannot automatically be transferred to a Negro deprived population. There are too many differences in their life experiences. This paper analyzes the replies to an attitude questionnaire of a group of lower-lower class Negro mothers and a white middle-class group of the same age living in the same city. The questionnaire was administered as part of a research preschool program conducted by the Public School System in Ypsilanti, Michigan.[1]

The purpose of this paper is not to compare attitudinal differences between two classes, controlling for all other variables such as race, I.Q., size of family, etc. Rather, its intent is to provide insight into the socialization process of urban, culturally deprived children by focusing upon the attitudes of their mothers, who were respondents not selected on the basis of their willingness to cooperate. As Bronfenbrenner (1958) states:

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[1] The authors wish to thank the following persons, for without their cooperation the Project and this present report would not have been possible: Rosemary Sarri, Associate Professor, The University of Michigan School of Social Work and David Weikart, Director of Special Services, Ypsilanti Public Schools, and Director of the Perry Preschool Project. The Perry Preschool Project is supported by a grant, number 2494, Contract OE 4-10-085 from The Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

> "Perhaps the classic portrait is yet to be seen along the skid rows and tobacco roads of the nation, but these do not lie along the well trodden paths of the survey researcher. He is busy ringing doorbells, no less, in the main section of the lower-class district, where most of the husbands have steady jobs and, what is more important, the wife is willing to answer the door and the interviewer's question...."

The disadvantaged Negro mothers in this study were preselected for participation in the Preschool Project on the basis of data about the child and his family. All of the women except two replied to the attitude questionnaire. (One was willing but unable to comprehend the questions because of limited intellectual ability. Another mother, who later proved to be a near psychotic, refused to reply to any question.) Thus, no selective factor of cooperative attitude effected the sample. The authors believe these women are genuinely representative of the "skid row" urban Negro who lives in poverty.

The expressed parental attitudes of these lower-lower class women were compared to the views of a middle-class population. The differences found were analyzed statistically and examined in the light of some current theories of the origin of child-rearing attitudes.

Procedure

The study was conducted in Ypsilanti, a community of about 25,000 on the fringe of metropolitan Detroit, encompassing a wide spectrum of socio-economic levels. Within its borders, or nearby, are Eastern Michigan University, many small factories and some large industrial plants. There are several new middle-class housing subdivisions in the area, as well as some old sections where deteriorating homes predominate. In its great diversity of people and products, Ypsilanti is a microcosm of a large urban city such as Detroit or Chicago.

About 25% of Ypsilanti's population is Negro with few in the middle-class or above. Many of the Negroes work in service capacities in neighboring Ann Arbor. Virtually, all of the Negroes in Ypsilanti live in the southwest section, where, for the most part, their children between the ages of six and twelve attend Perry School.

In 1962, 48 Negro children were chosen from the Perry School attendance area (one of the ten within the Ypsilanti Public School system) for the Preschool Program. The mothers of the 48 youngsters serve as the culturally disadvantaged population discussed in this paper. The children selected for the Preschool Program received low scores on a Cultural Deprivation Scale, an adaptation of a measure developed by Deutsch (1962). The scale gave equal weight to the educational level and occupation of the parents and half weight to household density. The youngsters also scored in the educably mentally retarded range on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, with no discernible organic involvement. The authors' belief is that the retardation observed was largely due to cultural deprivation and does not unduly bias the parental sample. An indication of this is that the mean I.Q. on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test of the entire first grade class at Perry School from 1961 to 1964 was 86.7.[2]

For comparative purposes, data were collected in 1962 on 51 mothers who registered their children for kindergarten at the Erickson Elementary School. This building is located in an upwardly mobile section of the Ypsilanti Public School District. Within Erickson's attendance area are several subdivisions with homes varying in price from $12,000 to $25,000.

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[2] The source of this information is a study conducted by the Ypsilanti Public Schools in the Spring of 1965.

There is a significant difference ($p < .001$) between the average scores for the two samples on the Cultural Deprivation Scale. Some of the differences between the two groups are found in Table 1.

A widely used questionnaire, the Parental Attitude Research Instrument, developed by Schaefer and Bell (1958), was administered to mothers of children in both the Perry Preschool Program and the Erickson kindergarten class. The test was given orally to the Perry mothers because of their questionable literacy but administered as a written test to the Erickson mothers.[3] The PARI consists of 23 sub-scales, each measured by five items. The questions are worded in a way which forces the respondent to strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, or strongly disagree with each of 115 statements. Table 2 lists the 25 sub-scales according to their descriptive titles.

Following the procedures of Schaefer (1957) and Zuckerman, Ribback, Monashkin and Norton (1958), a factor analysis was performed on the scores of the group of 94 mothers.

Results

The authors found four factors, three of them confirming earlier work; Approval of Maternal Control, Approval of Expression of Hostility, and Approval of Positive Attitudes Toward Child-Rearing. A fourth factor which has not been reported before, included the following sub-scales (the number refers to the factor loading):

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[3] In addition to the 51 administered as a written test to the Erickson sample, seven were administered orally to other Erickson kindergarten mothers. No significant differences in PARI scores between the two groups were found.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA FOR
PERRY AND ERICKSON SCHOOL SAMPLES

Socio-Economic Status	Perry (N=44)	Erickson (N=50)
Cultural Deprivation Score	8.2	16.4
Mother's Education (average grade)	9.2	12.7
Father's Education (average grade)	8.3	13.8
Mother's Occupation* (average level)	1.0	3.1
Father's Occupation* (average level)	1.1	3.4
Number of Children in Family (average)	4.5	3.2
Number of Rooms in Home (average, including bath)	4.9	7.0
Number of Other Individuals in Home (average)	0.3	0.0
Household Density (rooms per person)	0.9	1.5
Population of Mother's Birthplace**	2.2	2.4
Average Age of Mother	30	31
Average Age of Father	35	34
Mother Born in South	80%	22%
Mother Educated in South	48%	19%
Mother Working	20%	12%
Father in the Home	48%	100%
Family on Welfare	58%	0%
Dictionary in the Home	24%	90%
Magazines in the Home Regularly	43%	90%

*Occupational Scale: 1 = unskilled labor; 2 = semi-skilled labor; 3 = skilled labor; 4 = professional or managerial.

**Population of City Scale: 1 = under 9,999; 2 = 10,000 to 99,999; 3 = 100,000 to 499,999; 4 = 500,000 to 999,999; 5 = one million and over.

TABLE 2

CLASS DIFFERENCES IN PARI SUB-SCALES
(N=94)

Rank Order	PARI Sub-Scales	Factor*	Differences In Mean Between Classes	Significance Level**
1	Suppression of Sexuality	I	6.4	.001
2	Martyrdom	I	6.2	.001
3	Acceleration of Development	I,IV	5.6	.001
4	Fostering Dependency	I	5.0	.001
5	Ascendency of the Mother	I	4.7	.001
6	Seclusion of the Mother	I,IV	4.6	.001
7	Intrusiveness	I	4.6	.001
8	Inconsiderateness of the Husband	I,IV	4.6	.001
9	Avoidance of Communication	I	4.4	.001
10	Excluding Outside Influences	I	4.1	.001
11	Deification	I	3.7	.001
12	Fear of Harming the Baby	IV	3.6	.001
13	Breaking the Will	I	3.5	.001
14	Dependency of the Mother	IV	3.4	.001
15	Suppression of Aggression	I	3.2	.001
16	Marital Conflict	II,III	1.8	.001
17	Strictness	I	1.8	.01
18	Approval of Activity	I	1.6	.001
19	Equalitarianism	III	1.6	.01
20	Rejection of the Homemaking Role	II	1.1	----***
21	Comradeship and Sharing	III	.9	.05
22	Encouraging Verbalization	III	.3	----
23	Irritability	II	.2	----

*I = Approval of Maternal Control; II = Approval of Expression of Hostility; III = Approval of Positive Attitudes Toward Child-Rearing; and IV = Maternal Anxiety.

**Use of F Ratio with 1 and 120 degrees of freedom.

***- = not significant

Fear of Harming the Baby	.58
Acceleration of Development	.57
Seclusion of the Mother	.56
Dependency of the Mother	.49
Inconsiderateness of the Husband	.45

An examination of the individual questions comprising each of the sub-scales led to the conclusion that this scale represents Maternal Anxiety. The sub-scale, Fear of Harming the Baby, seems to be a direct measure of this anxiety. Seclusion of the Mother and Inconsiderateness of the Husband appear to represent defenses against anxiety through withdrawal and projection. Acceleration of Development, with its emphasis on early toilet training and weaning, can be interpreted as a reflection of fear of peer-group disapproval. Dependency of Mother seems related to the parent's general emotional growth. An inspection of Table 2 reveals that two of these sub-scales appear in no other factor. The appearance of this factor in this study, and no other, seems related to the much greater deprivation found in this sample population.

Table 2 lists the differences found in the means of the 23 PARI sub-scales. The Perry sample means were uniformly higher. Evidence that more than acquiescence set is involved was presented in a previous paper (Radin and Glasser, 1965).

Consistent with previous findings, the factor Approval of Maternal Control, showed the greatest class discrepancy (Schaefer and Bell, 1958; Garfield and Helper, 1962; Zuckerman, et al., 1958 and 1960). The sub-scales in the unique factor, Maternal Anxiety, show the second highest differences in means between disadvantaged and middle-class mothers. Thus, lower-class mothers may be said to express more controlling attitudes than middle-class mothers, and also show greater anxiety.

An analysis was made of the relationship between various background variables and PARI sub-scales scores. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Discussion

The origin of social class differences in child-rearing attitudes cannot easily be discerned. A variety of theories have been advanced, and each may be a contributing factor to the consistent results found in this and other studies. Two of these theories, the "drift down" theory and the "occupational orientation" theory, will be reviewed, and related to the data reported above. An additional factor, Oppressive Life Conditions, will also be discussed as a possible explanation of parental attitudes.

Bronfenbrenner (1958) advanced the "drift down" hypothesis in his review of studies of child-rearing techniques reported during the last twenty-five years. While middle-class parents were once more "restrictive" than working-class parents, today the reverse is true. He notes that middle-class changes in techniques have closely paralleled those advocated by presumed experts, and concludes that this is so because "child-rearing practices are likely to change most quickly in those segments of society which have closest access and are most receptive to the agencies or agents of change (e.g., public media, clinics, physicians, and counselors)". It takes longer for this expert advice to drift down to the disadvantaged parent because she reads fewer magazines and books and is less responsive to them when they are read.

The significantly greater approval of maternal control by the lower class sample would seem to substantiate this hypothesis, although the fact that the lower-class sample was comprised entirely of Negroes, known

to be matriarchal, may also have contributed to the differences found. An analysis of the two class groups together (N=94) was performed to establish the associations between the answer to the question, "Do you have any magazines in your home regularly?" and each of the PARI sub-scales. Fourteen of the 15 sub-scales in the factor Approval of Maternal Control had significant correlations at the .05 level or better with this question. While a large percentage of those who answer "Yes" to this question are no doubt in the middle-class, not all were. Thus, this finding does partially substantiate the Bronfenbrenner hypothesis concerning the importance of access to "expert" opinion.

However, Bronfenbrenner does not consider the effect of such mass media as radio and television, to which all classes are exposed. Further, Kohn (1963) notes that the middle-class parent need not follow the expert's advice. For this reason, other explanations may also be pertinent.

Kohn (1963) and Miller and Swanson (1951) suggest an alternative theory, that child-rearing attitudes and techniques grow out of parental values which are related to the occupational structure. Kohn (1963) states:

> "There are at least three respects in which middle-class occupations typically differ from working-class occupations, above and beyond their obvious status-linked differences in security, stability of income, and general social prestige. One is that middle-class occupations deal more with the manipulation of inter-personal relations, ideas, and symbols, while working-class occupations deal more with the manipulation of things. The second is that middle-class occupations are more subject to self-direction, while working-class occupations are more subject to standardization and direct supervision. The third is that getting ahead in middle-class occupations is more dependent upon one's own actions, while in working-class occupations it is more dependent upon collective action, particularly in unionized industries. From these differences, one can sketch differences in the characteristics that make for getting along, and getting ahead, in middle- and working-class occupations. Middle-class occupations require a greater degree of self-direction; working-class occupations, in large measure, require that one follow explicit rules set down by someone in authority."

Since the occupational structure in the two social classes parallels the characteristics valued by parents for children, he believes it is a reasonable supposition that the former is a cause for the latter.

The data in this study indicates that class differences on the factor, Approval of Maternal Control hold up despite the fact that in the Perry Preschool sample 52% of the fathers were not in the home, 80% of the mothers were not working, and 58% of the families were on welfare. This would tend to support Kohn's belief that occupational values are not restricted to the worker but permeate to his wife and his entire milieu.

Neither the "drift down" nor the "occupational orientation" explanations, however, account for the significant differences found between the two classes on all of the sub-scales associated with the factor, Maternal Anxiety. While Kohn (1963) places special emphasis upon the occupational structure to account for differences in child-rearing attitudes, he notes that other class differences may be important also for his interpretative model: "social class-conditions of life-values-behavior". However, he does not specify what these conditions of life are. It is the authors' belief that it is particularly these other conditions, the oppressive life conditions of the impoverished, that account for the significant differences in means found between sub-scales on the Maternal Anxiety factor. These life conditions also contribute to differences observed on the Maternal Control factor.

To illustrate, when a large number of people are required to live in a confined area, strong maternal controls over children may be required to supervise the children, keep track of them, and maintain a degree of peace of mind for all. This Maternal Control may be reinforced further by the

lack of a husband and father figure, who can carry out the approved cultural role of disciplinarian. In addition, when the family is on public assistance, the mother may see herself as dependent upon her worker's good will for food, clothing and shelter for her children and herself, and may well be anxious that her grant will be reduced or cut off if her children's behavior is interpreted as evidence that she is an inadequate or neglectful mother. She may also see a good deal more delinquency, crime and illegitimacy around her than the typical middle-class mother. The anxiety this causes may be related to her desire for strong controls on her children so that they neither fall into the same trap nor become its victims. The lower-class mother in our sample may see the world around her as oppressive, insecure, and filled with anxiety. Her attitudes may reflect the ways in which she is trying to protect herself and her children from this world or ward off the anxiety associated with it. This view may be an accurate appraisal of her milieu. S. M. Miller (Reissman, Cohen and Pearl, 1964), "'Lower class' life is crisis-life, constantly trying to make-do with string where rope is needed. Anything can break the string."

Table 3 which summarizes the relationships between specific social background factors and PARI sub-scales presents evidence for this hypothesis. The number of children in the family and spaciousness in the home were significantly related to many sub-scales within the Maternal Control and Anxiety factors. The absence of a father was similarly closely related.

Table 3 also indicates that there are a small number of social and personal characteristics, such as religion and age of mother, which are also related to class-linked PARI sub-scales. Thus, while social class factors may explain a good deal of the variation in child-rearing attitudes

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCORES ON PARI SUB-SCALES AND BACKGROUND VARIABLES

(N=94)

Background Variable[c]	Number of Sub-Scales In Each Factor[a] Showing a Significant Relationship With Background Variables[b]			
	Factor I Approval of Maternal Control (15 sub-scales)	Factor II Approval of Expression of Hostility (3 sub-scales)	Factor III Approval of Positive Attitudes Toward Child-Rearing (4 sub-scales)	Factor IV Maternal Anxiety (5 sub-scales)
1) Age of Mother	0	1	1	0
2) Number of Children	10	0	1	2
3) Mother's Education	15	1	2	5
4) Cultural Deprivation Rating	15	1	3	5
5) Spaciousness in the Home	13	0	0	3
6) Population of City In Which Mother Was Born	2	0	1	1
7) Religion (Catholic or Non-Catholic)	6	1	2	3
8) No Father in the Home	12	1	3	5
9) Family on Welfare	15	0	2	5
10) Magazines in the Home Regularly	14	0	0	5
11) Family Member With a Physical Disability	5	0	0	1

(a) See Table 2 for the sub-scales in each factor.
(b) At the .05 level of confidence or better with a two-tail test of significance.
(c) Variables 1-6 computed by means of a Pearson Coefficient of Correlation.
Variables 7-11 computed by means of a Bi-serial correlation.

of mothers, it does not explain all of the variation. Prediction of parental attitudes may be increased through the use of additional social and psychological variables.

Summary

As part of a preschool project for culturally deprived children, the Parental Attitude Research Instrument was administered to a group of middle-class white mothers and a group of lower-lower class Negro mothers. A comparison of the two groups revealed that the sub-scales in two factors had the highest significant differences in means between classes. The first, Approval of Maternal Control, replicated previous work. The second, Maternal Anxiety, was unique to this study. While Bronfenbrenner's "drift down" theory and Kohn's "occupational orientation" theory seem applicable to the findings, the authors believe that the oppressive conditions of poverty found among this Negro culturally deprived sample may be an equally potent explanation for differences in the two factors.

This study gives indication that the findings of attitudinal investigations involving a white working class, employed population cannot automatically be transposed to a deprived Negro population. Unique factors appear to be operating in these lower-lower class families which do not appear elsewhere.

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